



GASCO Removal Action

May 2004

NW NATURAL GAS WILL REMOVE SEDIMENT CONTAMINATION

Tar Cleanup is Second Portland Harbor Early Action Agreement

The U.S. EPA and Northwest Natural (NWN) recently signed a legal agreement called an Administrative Order on Consent (AOC) to remove tar-laden sediment in the Willamette River next to the 35-acre GASCO site on NW St. Helens Road in Portland. Northwest Natural owns and operates the site.

The GASCO project is the second “early action” agreement within the Portland Harbor Superfund Site and the first in-water removal of contamination.

Sediment along the riverbank and river bottom next to the GASCO site is visibly contaminated with tar containing polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and benzene. EPA has determined that removing the tar is time-critical, so work will begin this summer to reduce the possibility of releasing hazardous substances into the Willamette River and downstream areas.

Administrative Record Available for Review

The Administrative Record for the GASCO site is available for public review. Copies can be reviewed at the information repositories listed at the bottom of page 3 of this fact sheet, or on the EPA website at:

<http://yosemite.epa.gov/r10/cleanup.nsf/ph/GASCO>

Documents in the Administrative Record include the:

- Action Memorandum
- Administrative Order on Consent
- Statement of Work.
- Supporting Documentation

Comments are requested **by June 15, 2004** to:

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Proposed Action Helps Achieve Three Objectives

The cleanup activities will include removing the highest concentrations of tar from the riverbank and Willamette River bottom sediment, disposing of the contaminated material off-site at an approved hazardous waste facility, and placing a thin layer of clean material over the dredged surface. This proposed action will:

1. Cleanup the GASCO tar body, a known contaminated hot spot in the river
2. Reduce exposure risk for people and wildlife, protecting human health and the environment
3. Reduce the likelihood of high level contamination being carried downstream

People and wildlife may be exposed to the contamination

People with higher probability of coming in contact with contamination from the site, such as trespassers, transients, recreational boaters and site workers may be at risk, especially during low water.

Many types of fish and wildlife can be potentially affected by coming in contact with the tar body, including fish, shellfish, other aquatic life, and waterfowl, especially fish-eating birds. People who catch and eat fish and wildlife from the contaminated area may also be exposed to hazardous substances through the food chain.

How the GASCO Removal Fits In With the Portland Harbor Sediment Investigation

GASCO is located within the boundaries of the larger Portland Harbor Superfund site. Over the past ten years, investigations by EPA and DEQ have documented the presence of tar-laden sediment in the river and along the riverbank. Cleaning up the tar-body at GASCO will help protect people and the environment by reducing the likelihood of contamination being released from the tar into the river while the harbor-wide sediment investigation is underway.

This early cleanup action is a positive step for Northwest Natural Gas. The company's willingness to begin performing cleanup work jump-starts the cleanup needed the GASCO site. Although the removal work this summer will not address all contamination at the site, it represents a big step forward. In addition to the removal of the tar-body in the river, Northwest Natural Gas has entered a voluntary cleanup agreement with the Department of Environmental Quality to clean up contamination located upland on the facility

Next Steps

EPA has designated the GASCO removal work as a "time-critical action" which means that planning for the site cleanup work must be completed in less than six months. Here are the steps being taken to get cleanup underway:

PLANNING - Spring 2004

- NWN will submit a draft removal action work plan to EPA within 30 days.
- NWN will take samples from the site to get information needed to plan the cleanup details
- NWN will provide a project design for EPA approval.

continued

Next Steps *continued*

CLEANUP - Summer/Fall 2004

- NWN will remove the contamination under EPA oversight

FOLLOW-UP - 2004/2005

- NWN will provide EPA with a Removal Action Completion Report within 60-days after the cleanup is finished.
- NWN and EPA will begin to monitor the effectiveness of the cleanup

How You Can Be Involved

You are invited to review and comment on the Administrative Record for GASCO.

During the GASCO removal, EPA will:

- Provide updates at monthly meetings of the Portland Harbor Community Advisory Group
- Provide progress updates in the Portland Harbor quarterly newsletter
- Visit community groups and neighborhood associations when requested
- Keep the GASCO/Portland Harbor website updated with project information

About the Site

GASCO (the former Portland Gas and Coke Company) built and operated an oil gasification plant on the site between 1913 and 1956. The site was originally about 85-acres, but over the past century portions of the facility have been sold or leased to other owners and operators. The present site encompasses about 35 acres.

From 1913 to 1941, waste and by-products from various gas production operations were discharged

directly to the Willamette or to stream channels and low-lying areas of the GASCO site. From 1941 to 1956, wastewater effluent and tar stills were disposed of in settling ponds. About 30,000 cubic yards of tar waste had accumulated by the time the plant was shut down and the ponds were buried under 10 feet of fill in 1973. Portions of the site are currently used for natural gas storage by NW Natural and for bulk petroleum storage by a leaseholder.

For More Information About GASCO

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*Alternative formats are available. To request reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities, please call Judy Smith.
TTY users: please call 1-800-977-8339.*

Information is available at the following repository locations in Portland:

St. Johns Branch Library, Reference Desk,
7510 N. Charleston Ave.

Northwest Branch Library, Reference Desk,
2300 N.W. Thurman St.

Central Library, Reference Desk,
801 S.W. 10th Ave.

GASCO website:
<http://yosemite.epa.gov/R10/cleanup.nsf/ph/GASCO>



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